DR. DAY CONTROVERSY

San Rafael, Jan. 5, 1911.

The following statement has been prepared at the request of a number of loyal friends of the Seminary, who are deeply interested in its present and future welfare, and is respectfully presented to the Board of Directors.

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Never, we believe, have the members of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Theological Seminary been called upon to consider and decide a more serious and important question than that which is to come before them at the meeting called for January 11, 1911. It is a question which involves not only the reputation and position of a brother minister, but also what is of far more importance—the good name and future influence of the Seminary itself and to some extent of the entire church.

The responsibility of each member of the Board of Directors is a heavy and solemn one, and the church should earnestly pray that they may be given wisdom and grace to arrive at a righteous decision, and one that will help and not hinder the progress of Christ's cause on this coast.

On the floor of the Synod the discussion of the subject was necessarily fragmentary, partial and inconclusive. There was little time for careful study or calm debate. In the Board of Directors upon whom rests the entire responsibility of a final decision we may hope for a more judicial atmosphere, a more extended and unprejudiced consideration, and therefore, a wiser and more reliable verdict.

The question concisely stated, which the Board must answer is: "Shall Dr. Day be removed from his professorship?"

There are three reasons, either one of which might seem to be sufficient to require an affirmaitve answer to this question.

I.

The first is "that the Synod, by its action at Fresno, has in effect, instructed the Board to remove Dr. Day." But that this, even if it were a fact is, in reality, no proper reason for doing so appears from the following considerations:

According to the "Plan of the Seminary," which is the constitution and supreme law for Directors, the duty of appointing or removing professors is laid absolutely upon the Board of Directors, such appointment or removal being subject only to the veto or approval of the Synod after action has been taken.

The responsibility of acting upon his own individual judgment is thus placed upon the conscience of each Director. This is the wise provision made by the church to safeguard both the teaching and the teachers of the Seminary, and to protect the institution and its work from the hasty, often ill-considered, and some times prejudiced action of such a large and short lived body as the Synod, influenced, as it too often is, by waves of feeling, by sentiment, and by popular opinion. Therefore, even if the Synod had expressed its disapproval of Dr. Day's entire teachings and had even explicitly demanded his removal, no individual Director would have any right to adopt that opinion, or to yield to that demand against his own private judgment. Should he do so he would be recreant to his duty to the church and would just so far, fail to meet the very purpose of his appointment as a Director. And this of course, applies as much to those elected at the last meeting of the Synod as to any others.

But as a matter of fact, the Synod did not demand, or request, or advise Dr. Day's removal, and no one has any right to interpret its action as meaning or implying any such demand, or request, or advice. It is no doubt true that many of those who voted with the majority did so intend, but it is also true that others (how many who can say?) only expressed by their votes, their disagreement with some of Dr. Day's critical views, and would be quite averse to his removal from the Seminary faculty.

A candid analysis of the votes sustains this position and even shows that the majority of the Synod emphatically endorsed (a) Professor Day's method's of teaching; (b) his principles of investigation and Bible study, and (c) all the more important of his conclusions.

(a) That they endorsed **hismethods of teaching** is clear in view of the vote to approve his answer to Question II.

QUESTION XI.

"Do you believe it to be your duty, as a teacher in the Seminary, simply to state diverse and conflicting views that may be held touching the integrity and authority of Holy Scripture, leaving your pupils to draw their own conclusions? Or, do you feel it to be your duty to impress upon your pupils what you believe to be correct views, and this, with the earnestness of assured and settled conviction?

ANSWER.

"I believe it to be my duty as a teacher in the Seminary to stand to my pupils in the relation of counsellor and guide as well as instructor. When there are diverse and conflicting views touching subjects that belong to my department, I believe it to be my duty to draw attention to these.

"I distinguish between questions of criticism and questions of doctrine; between the plain facts of Scripture and possible inferences that may be drawn from them. I believe it to be my duty as a teacher to show the student how to make the distinction.

"I believe and teach that either the traditional or the modern critical view of the Old Testament may be held by Evangelical Christians, consistently with a firm belief in its divine inspiration. I regard questions concerning the dates and human authorship of the various books as of secondary importance as compared with the fundamental spiritual meaning and I so teach.

"Inasmuch as a reasonable criticism has not overthrown my belief in the spiritual integrity and authority of the Bible, I am glad to make the fact known to those with whom it is to my privilege to labor. And when I find for myself great spiritual truths breaking forth from any book of the Old Testament, which I study critically, I rejoice in the opportunity to make my fellow-students see these truths as I see them."

Approved.

This endorsement of Dr. Day's **methods in conducting the work of his department** is emphasized by the vote to approve his answer to Question 14.

QUESTION XIV.

"Does your acceptance of any of the results of higher criticism affect in any way (a) Your acceptance of and loyalty to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God? (b) Your acceptance of and loyalty to the standards of the Presbyterian Church?

ANSWER (a) No.

"On the contrary, I am persuaded that a sound and constructive criticism has raised the Scriptures to a position of greater sacredness and power than they have occupied in any previous age. It has simplified Christian Apologetic. It has taken stumbling-blocks out of the path of many earnest inquirers. It has helped me to place emphasis on the essentials of doctrine and faith. It has inspired greater confidence in the divine message of the Book, by compelling me to recognize Christ as the Supreme Teacher, and to see in his word the touchstone of spiritual truth.

ANSWER (b) No.

"The questions that belong to Higher Criticism are not touched upon in the standards of the Church. Nothing is there said touching questions of date, authorship, and literary character of the Old Testament writings. Attention is confined mainly to the purity, sufficiency, inspiration, and spiritual authority of the Scriptures, the last depending, not upon human testimony, but upon that of the Holy Spirit, "bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." On critical questions, therefore, the confession allows liberty and divergence of opinion. I continue to receive our doctrinal standards "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures." "

Approved.

(b) That they endorsed his **principles of investigation and Bible Study** is proved by the vote to approve his answer to Question 7.

QUESTION VII.

"Is the book of Jonah, as we have it, a veritable history? And is its prophecy veritable prophecy?

ANSWER.

"(a) "Is the book of Jonah veritable history?" There is no reason why the book of Jonah could not be regarded as a veritable history, so far as the possibility of miracle is concerned. The question is not, could the things therein recorded have occurred, but did they occur? Applying the same rule to the story of the rich man and Lazarus, we reach the same result. Doubtless that story could have been the record of an occurrence. The question is, was it such a record? When we call this story a parable, we take it out of the category of historical narratives. We do the same when we call the book of Jonah a parable, and this is what most modern interpreters are inclined to do. It does not seem that Jesus' reference to Jonah necessitates its historical verity, any more than would the taking of Jesus' parables as the basis of a comparison compel us to assume their historical truth."

(b) "Is the book of Jonah veritable prophecy?"

ANSWER.

"Defining prophecy as "inspired preaching to the times," we are bound to say that the book of Jonah is a prophetic book. Its parabolic character is not only far easier to maintain, but its prophetic purpose is thereby brought into clearer light. What was that purpose? It was apparently to convict the Jews of the writer's day of shameful narrowness in wishing to exclude the people of outside nations from the privileges of the religion of Jehovah. Jonah thus becomes a type of Israel, and Israel's exile in Babylon is symbolized by the prophet being swallowed by a great fish, which figuratively represents the Babylonian empire. (See Jer. 51:34-44.) The book is thus a veritable prophetic writing, bearing the marks of inspiration, and is, besides, one of the most beautiful and artistic compositions to be found in all literature."

Approved.

This endorsement of his principles of Biblical research is also shown by their approval of the answer to Question 9.

QUESTION IX.

"Did Jesus Christ and His Apostles, when quoting from the Old Testament, mean to authenticate it as the Word of God? And consequently, as having divine authority?"

ANSWER.

"There are here two questions, but they are really one, for if the Old Testament is the Word of God, it possesses divine authority.

"Christ and His Apostles did most certainly regard the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God and the living source of spiritual instruction. The belief shines out from almost every page of the New Testament. As a child Jesus imbibed His religious ideas from the Old Testament, and as a public teacher He made constant reference to it with characteristic familiarity and reverence. The New Testament writers make copious quotations from the Old Testament, directly or by allusion, for purposes of illustration, admonition and argument. The fact here stated is not to be minimized on the ground that their quotations from the Old Testament were marked by a freedom far beyond what one would naturally expect to find. As showing their spirit and method in dealing with the Old Testament the following facts are of interest:

'1. Jesus probably habitually spoke Aramaic. Whether He knew Greek or not, the language He employed in public teaching was that which he learned from His mother's lips. The Gospels in only a few instances record His original utterances. As for the rest, they give the Greek equivalent. For this reason we cannot say with certainty what was Jesus' usual method of quoting from the Old Testament. We may, however, infer that He quoted freely rather than with literal exactness. The inference receives support from two facts: 1st. The Method of the Apostles, which they apparently learned from, and practised in common with, the Master, was that of informal citation; and, 2nd: Jesus exalted the spirit above the letter in such sayings as "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," (John 6:63), a saying that finds echo in Paul's declaration—"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2nd Corinthians, 3:6).

"II. We have direct evidence touching the methods of the Apostles. Only a few of the most apparent features will be mentioned. (For examples under each head see references given below).

"(a) There were three sources from which they could make quotations, the original Hebrew, the Greek (Septuagint) translation, and the Aramaic paraphrase. The Apostles quoted indifferently from one or the other of these.

"(b) Of the two hundred and seventy-five quotations, only about one fifth agree with the original Hebrew.

"(c) The New Testament writers quoted from the Septuagint, even though it differed from the Hebrew.

"(d) They altered the Septuagint or the Hebrew for the sake of the argument, or for literary reasons.

"(e) Their quotations frequently show slips of memory.

"(f) They sometimes made an independent paraphrase instead of citing the original.

"(g) They used quotations for their immediate purposes without regard to the original context.

"(h) They added or took away words, according as it suited their purposes.

"(i) They combined two or more quotations, sometimes with the result that the original sense was in part changed or contradicted.

"The remarkable thing about all this is that profound reverence for Holy Scripture was felt to be consistent with such free handling of its words and ideas."

Approved.

And their endorsement of his principles of Biblical criticism appears still further by the vote to approve the answer to Question 10.

QUESTION X.

"In general, do you accept the Old Testament, as we now have it, as the authentic and authoritative Word of God? Barring, of course, such minor interpolations and mistakes as may have crept in through the errors of copyists?"

ANSWER.

"(a) I accept the Old Testament as we now have it, when cleared of errors of copyists, as the authentic and authoritative Word of God for the people of God in the ancient time. I so accept it, also, notwithstanding any errors which modern criticism may have discovered, either in the writings themselves, or in the opinions that have been held in the past concerning them.

"(b) I accept it as authoritative for the Christian disciple in so far as it is in harmony with the spirit and teaching of our Lord. If in anything it is contardictory to that spirit, I choose the Master rather than the imperfect forerunner as my spiritual guide. My study of the Old Testament has led me to a deeper appreciation of its power and beauty and permanent spiritual value, in spite of the fact that some of the conceptions of God therein recorded are obsolete for the follower of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament must be tested by the touchstone of Christ's spiritual teaching. I profoundly believe that when it shall have been submitted to the test, the Christian can use the Old Testament with a more joyous, because more discriminating, faith."

Approved.

(c) That they endorsed all the more important of his conclusions is manifest when we note their approval of his answer to Question I (a): "Was the Pentateuch written under the inspiration of God?" Answer: "I believe it was so written." Question III (b) "Is the Book of Exodus to be accepted as a correct account of the events it purports to relate? Particularly as regards the redemption of the Hebrews from Egypt?" Answer; "I accept the account as true." Question VII. (Jonah) and Question XII (the virgin birth of Jesus). From all which it clearly appears, therefore, that while approving Dr. Day's methods of instruction, his principles of biblical research and study and many of his more important conclusions, the majority of the Synod simply did not consider as satisfactory, some of the conclusions to which these approved methods and principles have led him, and these of comparatively small importance. e. g. Question I: "Was the Pentateuch written by Moses, and under the inspiration of God?"

Compare the relative importance of the two parts of Dr. Day's answer: "It was written under the inspiration of God." Approved. "Moses did not write it all, nor the major part of it." Unsatisfactory.

A careful comparison of the questions and answers throughout reveals a similar contrast between the immense importance of the approved answers and the relative insignificance of those considered unsatisfactory by the majority of the Synod, a majority not necessarily more learned than the minority, or more orthodox, or more loyal to the standards of the Church, or more familiar with the subjects under discussion, but simply more in number.

II.

But there may be members of the Board who agree with the judgment of the majority of the Synod that Dr. Day's answers to some of the questions propounded to him are unsatisfactory. But this does not by any means warrant the conclusion that he should therefore be removed from his professorship for it must be carefully noted that all the answers adjudged to be unsatisfactory have to do only with comparatively unimportant details of interpretation, interesting and important, no doubt, as matters of scholarship and criticism, but having no vital connection with the realities of religion. Not one of these "unsatisfactory" conclusions touches upon the essentials of faith. Not one of them has anything to do with the substance of Doctrine. Not one of them denies or implies the denial of the inspiration of any book of the Bible, or questions for a moment its divine authority as a part of the "only infallible rule of faith and practice," while on the other hand the bulk of the questions which he has answered to the satisfaction of even the most conservative, relate to such essential doctrines as the Deity and the Virgin Birth of our Lord, the Fulfillment of Prophecy, the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament.

III.

The suggestion that Dr. Day ought to be removed from his chair for the sake of the peace of the Church takes for granted that it is possible to settle a controversy without regard to the merits of the questions at issue. It would be an affront to the intelligence of this Board to suggest that after careful consideration any member would seriously entertain this as a reason for removing Dr. Day.

But it has been put forward seriously by sincere friends of the Seminary "that the long drawn-out discussion of Dr. Day's teachings has given the Seminary a reputation for heterodoxy throughout the Church and that this discourages many students from studying at San Anselmo who would otherwise be led to take their theological course there." Unquestionably, this aspect of the matter has been greatly ex-

aggerated. This is conclusively shown by the attitude of such leaders of Presbyterianism in the East as Dr. Henry Van Dyke, of Princeton; Dr. George Alexander, of the University Place Church, New York; President Geo. B. Stewart, of Auburn Seminary; and a number of other representative Presbyterians.

But suppose, for the sake of the argument, that the Seminary is suffering from suspicion in some quarters of the Church. What then? Shall a man of unquestioned integrity and scholarship be sacrificed because of this? Such a sacrifice would remove not one difficulty. If Dr. Day should be removed in order to secure the loyalty to the Seminary of an uncertain number of men who do not agree with some of the results which he has reached in his Bible study, immediately thereafter the Seminary would have to face the well-deserved reputation of being a theological school which suppresses the fullest and frankest examination of the facts of Holy Scripture. Such a reputation would be a serious handicap in any day and age, but in our own it would effectually postpone to the remote future the realization of the hopes which every true friend of the Seminary entertains for it; that it shall become a veritable "school of the prophets" to which any man who calls Jesus "Lord" and is moved by devotion to Him to consecrate his life to the ministry may come for growth in grace and in the knowledge of Him, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Finally, the Synod by a unanimous vote, declared its will and judgment that every professor in the Seminary should be given in the conduct of his department the largest liberty within the limits of the Confession of Faith. That Dr. Day has gone outside those limits has not been shown, and cannot be. He, himself, emphatically and con amore asserts his loyalty to our standards, and accepts without qualification all that the Confession declares about the Bible, its inspiration and its authority.

In the face of this declaration, even without the very significant resolution of Synod, the Board of Directors cannot take steps to deprive the Seminary and the Church of the services of this faithful, competent and loyal scholar with any show of justice or wisdom, and no individual director can honestly vote for any such action unless he is personally convinced that Dr. Day's unsatisfactory teachings are not only contrary to the Confession of Faith, but that those unsatisfactory teachings are at the same time so vitally injurious as to outweigh all the good influences of his excellent scholarship, his devotion to truth, his unusual teaching ability, and his earnest and devout christian character.